

# EARLY NESTING RECORDS FOR MERLINS IN MONTANA AND NORTH DAKOTA

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A questionnaire regarding Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) eggs sent to several natural history museums in North America revealed a number of previously unreported sets collected in Montana and North Dakota. The first breeding records for the Merlin in Montana were recently reported by Ellis (*Condor* 78:112-114. 1976). However, 3 egg sets collected in Montana pre-dated Ellis' (1976) report. R.B. Hitz collected 2 eggs near Sun River on 5 July 1867 (National Museum of Natural History, USNM 13478). Two eggs were collected near Helena on 26 May 1882 by A.H. Palmer (Milwaukee Public Museum, MPM 417). The third set, consisting of 4 eggs collected in Dawson County on 11 May 1895, was collected by C.A. Thurston (Harvard University Museum of Comparative Zoology, MCZ 4285).

Several early nesting records for Merlins in North Dakota were reported by Stewart (Stewart, R.E. Breeding birds of North Dakota, North Dakota State Univ., Fargo. 1975). Additional nesting records for North Dakota include sets of 4 and 5 eggs collected in Stark County by R. Dodd on 25 May 1897 and 25 May 1900, respectively (Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, WFWZ 1077684 and 79652-5). A third set was collected on 13 May 1924 near Columbus by an unknown collector (University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, UMMZ 190898). Museum records provide useful historical information on nesting Merlins in the United States, yet they are often overlooked as sources of historical range use.

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